

MARRICKVILLE HERITAGE SOCIETY INC.

DULWICH HILL ENMORE LEWISHAM
ST PETERS SYDENHAM TEMPE

MARRICKVILLE PETERSHAM STANMORE
& PARTS OF CAMPERDOWN & NEWTOWN



OUR NEXT MEETING

Grace Karskens: What sort of colony?

Saturday 24 April 10.15 for 10.30 am

Herb Greedy Hall 79 Petersham Rd Marrickville

In this illustrated presentation, Grace Karskens will talk about her new book *The Colony: A History of Early Sydney* (2009, \$59.95). This is an original, intimate and engaging portrait of early Sydney, but it's also a radically different history of the origins of modern Australia. Whereas most histories to date still portray the early colony as though it was shaped exclusively by white, male officers, this book reveals the essential and powerful influences of convicts and emancipists, women, the negotiations and resistance of Aboriginal people, and local ecologies and environments which, then as now, underpin all else.



Sydney in 1800

(from the logbook of the *Minerva*: British Library)

Grace Karskens is Associate Professor – Convenor of Australian Studies Program and Senior Lecturer in Australian History, School of History and Philosophy at UNSW. Her current areas of research include colonial Australian history, cross-cultural history, urban history, environmental history, heritage, museums and material culture. Grace is widely published and has written two works on The Rocks including *Inside the Rocks: The Archaeology of a Neighbourhood*, 1999. Her latest book will be on sale at the talk which is a part of the National Trust Heritage Festival 2010.

SPONSORS SOUGHT FOR MHS JOURNAL

With a new journal editor, the *Heritage* journal is back on track and we're anticipating publication later this year. *Heritage* 13 will contain a variety of articles including a history of the Vicars Woollen Mill, the enigma of the 'Green Man' in Marrickville, a walking tour in O'Connell Town and reflections of MHS member, Harry Stone, who along with his wife Del, defied the authorities in the mid 1990s and refused to budge when much of Sydenham's housing was acquired for demolition. We invite MHS members and others to show their support by becoming a sponsor. All donations to the Society will be acknowledged in *Heritage* 13. Please indicate "donation journal".

National Trust Heritage Festival 9-24 April

Why Coptic Church should be retained: see inside

DA to Demolish 34 & 36 Pigott St Dulwich Hill

The Society has lodged a submission to Marrickville Council advocating refusal of a DA to demolish these houses and replace with 9x3 and 2x2 storey town houses. These two attractive early c. 1920s houses are in perfectly fine condition and Pigott Street north of Denison Road is a good example of a great stock of local c. 1920s single storey architecture.

Allowing these houses to be demolished and replaced could be the start of a debacle similar to that which occurred in nearby The Boulevarde in the 1950s-1970s transforming one of the finest thoroughfares in the western suburbs into a motley array of mostly characterless home units. The bulk and height of the proposed replacement town houses are totally out of kilter with the surrounding housing and should not be allowed to intrude into this streetscape.



36 Pigott Street Dulwich Hill (photo: Jacqueline Yetzotis)

A second component of the DA impacts on *Brook Lodge* at 174 Denison Road, the rear of which abuts Hoskins Park. This c. 1879 building (proposed for listing in the 2010 LEP as an item of heritage significance) has important historical links to the history of Dulwich Hill through the Davis family who built it. Whilst *Brook Lodge* (currently flats) is not proposed for demolition and is to be returned to a single residence, the plans for the building of 2x2 storey town houses to the rear of *Brook Lodge* is considered unacceptable in terms of loss of curtilage for this significantly early Dulwich Hill house in such a good state of repair. After all, quality nineteenth century houses are by no means in abundance in Dulwich Hill.

Clearly, the proposed development overlooking Hoskins Park would have a detrimental impact on the park and on park users which would in turn make this area less appealing for homebuyers and residents. This DA clearly must be refused.

Richard Blair

OUR LAST MEETING

Unlocking Parramatta's Hidden history

Entering Parramatta Park on Saturday 27 March, we stopped briefly to view Old Government House (closed for restoration) while our guide, **Bonney Djuric** explained to our group of 55 members how Parramatta became the first Australian town to be named after an aboriginal clan — the *Burramattagal*. With the arrival of the First Fleet in 1788, Capt. Arthur Phillip soon established a settlement there and it became an alternate home for NSW governors until 1856. In 1857 this Governor's Domain was declared a public park. Bonney pointed out the Qld native Bunya pines which flower every three years and bear edible pine nuts. In the 19th century because of their distinctive shape, bunyaes were landmark trees which identified government building sites.

A short walk brought us to Wistaria Gardens and *Glengarriff House* built in 1907 by Walter Liberty Vernon to house the medical superintendent, Dr William Cotter Williamson until 1921, and his successors until 1963. For the next 30 years, it was *Wistaria House*, a drug rehabilitation centre. Museum curator **Terry Smith** related the history of the site and we inspected the exhibits of fascinating medical memorabilia.

We inspected the exterior of Salter's Dairy and the adjoining 1870 ranger's cottage. Originally a 30 acre farm grant given to George Salter in 1796, the property was purchased by Gov. Macquarie in 1813 and the farmhouse was converted into a dairy around 1815.

After a picnic lunch, we drove to Fleet Street on the opposite side of the Parramatta River where the Female Factory Precinct is located. We could see the imposing buildings of the once Roman Catholic Orphan School. Here we were given the rare privilege of entering the grounds where we listened to Bonney relate first hand accounts of the controlled environment and treatment within the walls of the Parramatta Girls Home, where girls were made to scrub floors and paths for hours on end without being allowed to speak to each other; and were subjected to other humiliations and punishments like being locked in dark underground rooms with neither light nor windows for days at a time. Bonney's tales (including an eerie ghost story) were quite disturbing and astounding given that it operated until 1974 when it became the Kamballa and Taldree juvenile detention centre; in 1980 the original orphanage buildings were occupied as the Norma Parker Detention Centre for Women.

Built originally as a Government-owned Orphanage for Catholic Children in 1841 and run by secular staff until 1859 when the Sisters of the Good Shepherd took over management, most of the building additions occurred from 1850 to 1870, all towards the rear of the site and linked to the main building by a covered way. In 1887 the institution was occupied as the Girls Industrial School (Parramatta Girls Home) and replaced an earlier facility known as the Biloela Girls Industrial School, on Cockatoo Island. The GIS was operated by the Child Welfare Department and was the only facility in NSW where girls charged with an offence or found to be 'neglected' or 'destitute' were sent. We then went to the Kamballa section of the Home where the orphanage hospital building, Bethel (c. 1855) is located.

We proceeded along Fleet Street to the adjacent site where Cumberland Hospital is now located. This was once the site of Australia's first purpose built Female Factory where all unassigned convict women and their children were kept. The original 4 acre Female Factory site consists of a number of buildings, many which remain today, including the lying-in hospital, the Matron's quarters, the storekeepers quarters and the first women's penitentiary, now a storeroom.

The entire site is encircled by high stone walls. The Female Factory complex was designed by Francis Greenway and occupied in 1821. The main dormitory building was demolished around 1885 to make way for Ward 1 (now the NSW Institute of Psychiatry). Stone from the original building was incorporated into this building and also the Factory Clock. In front of it stands the original female factory bell. Convict women were designated according to their availability for assignment into first, second and third class, with the latter put to hard labour, breaking rocks and picking oakum. A

plaque commemorating the beginnings of the Sisters of Charity work in 1839 is located in front of a high stone perimeter wall where behind once stood a massive three storey 72 cell prison built in the same year on the orders of Governor Gipps.

In 1848 the factory became the Parramatta Asylum. One area was called the 'ha-ha' (pronounced haw haw) which contained open plan toilets for psychiatric patients who had to be on view at all times.

The day concluded with visits to Prince Alfred Park, Parramatta Heritage Centre to view their two exhibitions and finally the Catholic Cemetery with many early gravestones interspersed among tall trees.

Joy Colman

Note We thank **Bonney Djuric**, who coordinated the day, shared her stories and knowledge, imparted her enthusiasm for the PFF project, donated her book and provided supplementary material for this report. Thanks also to **Terry Smith**; facilitator, **Richard Blair**, assisted by **Sue Miller**, **Diane McCarthy**, **Ian Phillips** and **Sonia Laverty**; **Ted Green** and **Robert Hutchinson** (both with travel food).



What's so special about the rear of 118 Australia Street Camperdown? Well, Council has a DA to demolish the building and few local examples of such industrial architecture with storage loft and hoist exist. Check it out while it still stands (photo: Richard Blair).

WINGED VICTORY UPDATE

Justin Fitzpatrick-Barr Manager, Property Services, Marrickville Council recently advised that 'non destructive testing was carried out in early March by conservation consultants ICS'. They will also be advising on 'some additional concerns surrounding the removal of the existing capital as it may need to be cut from the trachyte column.'

ICS' report is expected by early April after which 'Council will formulate a suitable strategy for addressing the statue's restoration and/or replacement. The Marrickville Heritage Society, along with other identified stakeholders, will be notified once a suitable course of action has been determined.'

* * *

Meanwhile MHS vice president **Lorraine Beach** on a recent visit to the Victorian city of Warrnambool spotted this impressive war memorial, with an Italian marble female figure on a red granite column.



Coptic Church under threat of demolition

Sydenham residents will be aware of the brochure 'Have Your Say on the future of the Coptic Church site' circulated by Marrickville Council. In broad terms, this states Council has estimated refurbishment at \$2.3 million and that even after refurbishment there would remain concerns about 'poor amenity', 'possible health risks' and 'massive noise problems'. Council states an 'effective and sensitive solution' is to demolish the church and 'incorporate' the site into Sydenham Green with an 'appropriate acknowledgement of the former Coptic Church and its history'. Effective, yes, but sensitive? We don't think so.

The church building in Railway Road, Sydenham, widely referred to as 'the Coptic Church', was originally called Tempe Park Methodist Church. It dates from 1884, the foundation stone being laid on 11 April that year. The present building is the result of major extensions carried out in 1902, with parts of the original church being retained. During the 20th century when Methodism was strong, it had a huge and very active congregation.

In 1968-69, following a petition to the Papal See in Cairo, the first Coptic Orthodox priest, Father Nematalla, arrived in Sydney and, with funds contributed by his congregation, purchased this church. It was reconsecrated as St Mary and St Mina's Coptic Orthodox Church, the first Coptic Church in Australia and the first owned by Coptic migrants outside of Egypt. The church was transferred to Council's ownership by the commonwealth government in 2001 following its arrangements with the Coptic Orthodox Church to relocate to Bexley.

Buildings and places, being positive aids to memory, play a crucial role in social and cultural memory and identity, and in remembering and acknowledging the past. Much of Sydenham has already been erased by large-scale demolition from 1995 to 1998 due to a commonwealth government project associated with aircraft noise. **The razing took some 195 buildings, architectural reminders of generations of its former residents. The potential demolition of this church building represents a further erosion of identity and attachment to a suburb already decimated by demolition but surviving in spite of aircraft noise.**

The Society has written to Council commenting at length on each of the three major issues, namely:

Council's estimate of \$2.3 million to repair and restore the building: The church is a heritage listed item under Council's ownership. The Society and the community's expectation is that Council will demonstrate wise stewardship of heritage assets, including maintenance, appropriate use, and inclusion in Council's corporate planning and budget strategies to ensure ongoing sustainability. It would be reasonable to expect that Sydney Airports Corporation should contribute to costs at least in respect of the roof, which it already regularly repairs, as well as insulation, noise attenuation and mechanical ventilation as they have previously done for other Council and privately owned buildings within aircraft noise affected areas.

2) Poor amenity, noise and other health risks: If the building suffers 'poor amenity' we suggest that this is due to long term neglect resulting in gradual decline into uninhabitable disrepair. In our opinion the above issues would all be addressed during refurbishment.

It has been asserted by Council in the past that 'the aircraft noise is so severe that no one stays in the building for more than a couple of hours at a time'.

This argument defies common sense. A quick look at Google Earth reveals there are scores of residential and commercial properties within a block of the church, including Sydenham shops just down the road. Across the road and almost opposite the church is *Stonehaven*, a two-storey house acquired by Council in similar circumstances to the church. It is now known as The Stone Villa Inc., leased by Council to a group who successfully operate seven permanent art studios and one residential studio. The building continues to be viable and stands as an attractive landmark in an otherwise desolate landscape.



Coptic (formerly Tempe Park Methodist) Church, Railway Road Sydenham for which Marrickville Council 'believes an effective and sensitive solution is [to] demolish the building'.

(photo: Diane McCarthy)

There is every reason to expect a similar conversion being effective for the church building. As for the aircraft noise issue generally, the then Mayor Morris Hanna (a former Coptic Church parishioner) presented the 2007 Marrickville Medal for Conservation to All Saints Petersham for noise insulation works, funded by commonwealth government grants. Council would no doubt be eligible for a similar or other grant to insulate Sydenham's only church.

We are unaware what 'other health risks' may be since Council does not identify them in the brochure.

It has not been possible to make appropriate or effective use of the Coptic Church. It is improbable that any individuals or group would consider occupying any part of the building in its present state, so it is hardly surprising that a user for it has not been secured. However, it defies belief that given the number of diverse cultural, religious, artistic, social and other organisations within our local community, one or more willing and grateful users would not be found if the building were refurbished, noise insulated, and offered in presentable condition.

It is our belief the building has the potential to become a facility from which many residents could benefit. We ask Council to demonstrate good stewardship of this neglected heritage listed asset which has considerable significance to our socially and culturally diverse community. We urge Council to immediately make budget provisions for the refurbishment of the Coptic Church, and we urge all members, not just local residents, to 'have your say' in writing to Council.

Lorraine Beach

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Saturday 24 April

Grace Karskens *What sort of colony?*

Details on front page

Tuesday 18 May (morning)

Telstra Museum Bankstown

Saturday 22 May 2-4 pm

**Marrickville Road Historical walk with
Laurel & Bob Horton**

Tuesday 25 May 6 pm at Marrickville Library

Robert Hutchinson *Three Potteries of Marrickville*

Part of Library Week: Details in May newsletter

Recommended exhibitions

2010 Archibald Prize at Art Gallery of NSW daily till 30 May: finalists include portrait (rear view) of Geoff Ostling, former MHS president and the first one to be Archibaldly hung (artist Nick Stathopoulos)

One Hundred: Celebrating the Mitchell Library Centenary 1910-2010 at State Library daily till 16 June

SKINT! Making Do in the Great Depression at Museum of Sydney open daily until 25 July

Family History Group at Marrickville Library

Marrickville Library released an exciting range of new family history and genealogy databases in February. The family history collection operates on a DIY basis with library staff available to assist with advice in using resources and locating information.

To find out more, join the library's Family History Group which meets the fourth Monday of each month at 6 pm (next 26 April). For more information contact Ken via libml@marrickville.nsw.gov.au or 9335 2136.

The Inverell and Family History Group needs help in rebuilding its collection after their shopfront and research rooms in the historic Byron Arcade were destroyed by fire in January. Donations of historic images, photos or memorabilia relating to the area are sought. Either send to I&FHG at PO Box 367 Inverell 2360 or email Ann <tricketty6@bigpond.com>.



AUTUMN TRIVIA ANSWER

Four members correctly identified this fireman's helmet on the front of the former Stanmore Fire Station, 308-314 Stanmore Road Petersham. Originally known as

Marrickville Fire Station, it opened in 1886. By its closure in 1991, it was 'the oldest continually-occupied, permanently-manned fire station in Australia'. In the mid 1990s the building was acquired by the Mastertouch Piano Roll Company which relocated there in 2000, but for financial reasons closed in 2005. Much of the collection and plant went to the Powerhouse Museum. The building is now privately owned. Well identified **Shirley Hilyard, Diane McCarthy, Ken Swinbourne and Andrew Zafra.**

Show you care about heritage

In March we reported on Marrickville Council's initiative 'MyPlace 2021: Framing the Future', a website forum inviting community input to Council in preparing its Community Strategic Plan. Council has extended the time for accepting comments to the end of April. Let's ensure 'heritage' is included among the list of issues of importance to the community. It takes only a few minutes to leave your comments about preserving our built and cultural heritage and traditional streetscapes. You can do this by logging into the web forum <<http://www.myplace2021.com.au>> or by writing to Council, or by phone on 9335 2000.

IKEA SITE FIG STILL STANDS!



The Moreton Bay fig on the IKEA site in Tempe (said in the March newsletter to have been removed) is still there – a salutary reminder to the editor to double check what is reported. Still there, maybe, but with the current and future works planned for the site, how well will the extensive root system of this majestic old tree survive in the long term (photo: Laurel Horton)?

Lionel Cox OAM, Olympian cyclist died on 9 March aged 80. Born in Queensland he joined Marrickville Cycling Club and later Dulwich Hill Cycling Club. At the 1952 Helsinki Olympics he partnered Russell Mockridge to win Gold in the 2000 metre tandem, then won Silver in the individual 1000 metre sprint. From 1948 to 1955 he won numerous cycling events in Australia and Europe. Lionel played a leading role in NSW cycling junior development, and was the long time Dulwich Hill Cycling Club track coach. In 1993 he was inducted into the Sports Australia Hall of Fame and in 2008 was named in AOC historian Harry Gordon's list of Australia's 100 greatest Olympians.

The latest local club to close is the **Cooks River Motor Boat Club** in Holbeach Avenue, Tempe which was founded in 1917 and was one of the oldest such clubs in Australia. The club went into liquidation last year, after losing money for a long time. It was recently sold for \$1.08 million, but is thought to be unlikely to continue as a boat club. The issue of the lease of the adjacent dry dock seems a political hot potato and is beyond the brief of this newsletter.

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